



Course Evaluation:

Managing Interpretive Media Projects

Harpers Ferry Center, Interpretive Media Institute and the NPS Southeast Region
Mammoth Cave National Park
March 16-18, 2004



Mammoth Cave NP provided the setting for collaborative learning among service center media staff and park-based interpreters and media specialists.



The Interpretive Media Institute presented “Managing Interpretive Media Projects” at Mammoth Cave National park in the spring of 2004. The three-day course offered an overview of the media development process for park managers and interpreters.



IMI designed the course to assist field staff in managing interpretive media projects related to park facilities such as visitor centers, museums, nature centers, and historic structures, as well as outdoor media in their parks. Participants learned the steps involved in developing exhibits, wayside exhibits, museum displays, video presentations, and historic furnishings exhibits. They also received training in working within budgets, scheduling work, and hiring and working with contractors.

Instructors used HFC’s Media Development Process diagram, called the “Media Wheel,” throughout the course to help clarify the phases of development.

Participants in similar courses told IMI in evaluations that more examples and case studies would aid comprehension of the complex processes at work in media development. The principle case study selected for this course was the Peaks of Otter Visitor Center at Blue Ridge Parkway. Course Coordinator Peter Givens illustrated many of the steps of the "Media Wheel" with examples from the Peaks project which he managed for the Parkway.



A class review of existing interpretive media and facilities at Mammoth Cave served as another case study for the media class. The course agenda provided time for teams to examine existing media and offer suggestions for future development. Park, region, and HFC staff worked collaboratively on this. In addition, IMI gathered ideas from the participants on ways to improve media at Mammoth Cave as they embark on new phases of park development in the years ahead.

Peter Givens at the Peaks of Otter Visitor Center at Blue Ridge Parkway. This case study helped participants see the media development process in a more concrete way.

The course addressed elements of the curriculum for the following NPS core interpretive competencies: IDP Module 310, Planning Park Interpretation, and Module 311, Interpretive Media Development. Peter Givens, a certifier in the Interpretive Development Program, helped plan and deliver the course with IDP goals in mind.

Course Objectives

- Learn how to manage a media project in collaboration with HFC, partners, or contractors.
- Learn the key principles for successful media projects.
- Understand basic media development processes.
- Define a media project strategy, and be able to use it to develop a media project in your park.
- Become familiar with NPS media standards and guidelines.
- Understand cost estimating, funding, and programming procedures for media projects.
- Learn HFC's role in NPS media development.

Course Guidelines

- Dialog between course staff and participants will be encouraged.
- The media information HFC will be providing will apply to all park media work, not just projects to be planned or produced by HFC.

- The course will look at media development in an integrated manner, not isolated according to product types such as exhibits, waysides, and AV productions.
- Content will be tailored to the needs of park managers and park project managers.
- Instructors will use case studies to illustrate media processes.
- Course content will incorporate principles of the Interpretive Development Program.



Course Participants and Staff

The twenty (20) participants included NPS or partner employees who currently—or soon will be—managing development of interpretive media projects. Five media specialists from Harpers Ferry Center served as instructors on all phases of planning, design, and production in diverse media fields.



Course Coordinators Peter Givens (left) and Don Wollenhaupt represented the client group through the planning and delivery of the course. Peter is a veteran of multiple media projects, and Don is Chief of Interpretation, Southeast Region.

Standard NPS Evaluation Results

The highest possible value for each answer is 5.0

Course Name: **"Managing Interpretive Media Projects"**

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|---|----------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|---|
| Question and average rating | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Overall, course objectives were met. 4.5 | (8) 40 | (5) 20 | (1) 3 | — | — |
| I came to this training event expecting to work toward specific competencies. 3.6 | (3) 15 | (5) 20 | (5) 15 | — | — |
| I was highly satisfied with the overall training, considering my original expectations. 4.2 | (5) 25 | (7) 28 | (2) 6 | — | — |
| The training directly related to the duties of my position. 4.5 | (9) 45 | (3) 12 | (2) 6 | — | — |
| The sessions in this program were presented in a logical sequence. 4.6 | (8) 40 | (6) 24 | — | — | — |
| What I learned in this training will help me immediately in my job when I return. 4.4 | (9) 45 | (3) 12 | (1) 3 | (1) 2 | — |
| What I learned in this training will be put to use in the next six months. 4.7 | (10) 50 | (4) 16 | — | — | — |
| The course coordinator was effective. 4.7 | (10) 50 | (4) 16 | — | — | — |
| The meeting room provided a good learning environment. 4.9 | (13) 65 | (1) 4 | — | — | — |
| The facilities were suitable. 4.9 | (12) 60 | (2) 8 | — | — | — |

The overall course rating for all ten questions for all respondents is **4.5**.

What were the strong points of the course?

- Great discussions – gave participants idea of the media process used by Harpers Ferry Center. *Media Wheel* is a great step-by-step process to use as a guide for parks.
- Fantastic skill, subject area experts presenting and available for informative advice. Overview – extremely helpful – resource materials (notebook) will be used over and over again. Great dialogue between participants and presenters. Blue Ridge Parkway and MACA media projects were a good way to illustrate the Media Wheel elements.
- Networking with people from HFC along with conversation with other interpreters. The notebook and handouts.



- To have FIVE Harpers Ferry specialists is invaluable. Their input and expertise was monumental. To go out on the resource and experience it – to analyze the present and future media challenged us and created an opportunity for creativity. The notebook is going to get the message across. The open-forum communication between all the participants and the contacts made will be a great resource.
- The course curriculum centered around the Media Wheel was extremely effective. It presented the steps of media development in a proper and thorough sequence.
- Resource notebook looks enormously useful. Finding out the extent of assistance, templates, estimating services, etc. available at HFC was enormously helpful (and what a relief!) Understanding that and realizing we should start thematically not concretely (specific design elements etc) were most useful. "Peaks of Otter" study also very helpful.
- It was nice to have all the HFC staff. It was also nice to have some real questions that needed to be answered – it allowed us to think about the types of media that could be used.
- Exploration of the Media Wheel. Openness of the staff from the Harpers Ferry Center.
- Notebook is EXCELLENT. Presence of HFC specialists.
- The actual process in getting HFC involved. Applying what we learned to Mammoth Cave site.
- Also – at the end of the course on Thursday – the one-on-one conversations with HFC professionals were very beneficial to parks having individual needs.
- Having the people/staff from HFC there, with their expertise was very valuable. Having the opportunity to speak individually with HFC staff was the best part of the course. The comprehensive notebook with reference materials, for us to use once we return to the park.

- Good information about the media development process. Waysides presentation, historic furnishing elements well organized and easy to follow. Handouts will be useful.

What were the weak points of the course and how would you change them for the better?

- More examples of finished products film/video, wayside exhibit plans, etc., to give us ideas and let us know what plans will look like when finished. Having wayside panel examples was good. I know it costs to have them there. Although helping Mike w/ ideas for Mammoth was fun, it took time that I would have liked to have spent on course information.
- A lot of info in short time.
- Program felt like it was organized on the assumption that participants already had some knowledge of interp. media projects. I had no real knowledge beforehand and therefore felt like I came in on the middle of the program.
- More discussion on multimedia projects
- I would have liked to see a person and content of working with a partner and a non – NPS site. How do we, the NPS, adjust our standards for them – where do we draw the line? At what level do we have control, at what dollar level do we lose control? Can our partners use our contractors? There was no place for this discussion. There was a lack of resources presented for parks in the West. Exploring the media needs of Mammoth didn't allow us to explain how to produce those products.
- The only piece of information I needed but didn't get before the course began was where the course met. I'd like to see some info (a chart maybe?) with info from actual projects – park, square footage, timeline, cost, special features, estimated park time spent.
- Several presentations were team-taught and the flow of the presentations was sometimes interrupted. It was more effective when one presenter was given the time to present/ speech and develop ideas and ask and answer.
- At times, it felt like the HFC people were talking to each other. They were the only ones who understood what the other was saying. It would have been useful to hear more from Peter Givens – from the other side of the coin. At times, the most basic questions were not covered, the details were overlooked.
- Not enough time with each session and instructor.
- Overwhelming for the beginner – a longer course needed. As discussed with group – Superintendents, need to know these processes and what it takes (time, expertise) to accomplish effectively.
- I would have liked to have more time to discuss the exhibit design process – even just a basic diagram of the steps from funding to the final concept plan would have been useful. The same was needed for film media – a decision tree for deciding what the best option is for my park – high definition or something else. It also would have been helpful to discuss considerations with consultation, evaluation, accessibility and other areas that influence the process for developing media.

How will you apply the information and/or demonstrate the skill as a result of this training?

- By directly managing a major project at my park.
- I will complete my exhibit design plan and the planning for our new film. Then I will encourage our supt. to initiate a historic furnishing report for our CCC and to increase the involvement of HFC in our media projects.
- Will continue to work, contact HFC and parks to assist in planning, design, and fabrication efforts for interpretive media projects.
- This will be a jumping off point to manage interpretive media projects in my park. I now have a great basis to move forward!



- Write scopes of work for projects as well as project funding costs.
- The handouts in the notebook will be immediately used – especially for waysides.
- I will use the Media Wheel to organize my projects. My organization will be greatly improved. I now know what questions to ask and what problems to look for or avoid. I know where to get started and it will be easier to get media projects accomplished.
- Multiple media projects are currently going on in the park and undoubtedly more will follow. I am directly and indirectly involved in most of them. This course gives me the knowledge to make the best decisions throughout the project and achieve satisfactory results. It also put me in direct contact with HFC professionals and other NPS colleagues.
- Within the next few weeks my park will start on an exhibit project so this is perfect timing. I now have a much better idea of where to start, processes, and procedures, etc, plus a lot of good human, paper, and web resources. I plan to get into the Exhibit Planner software too!
- I will work for a treatment and then possible funding/production for a new video for our park.
- The Media Wheel will be used along with resources form Harpers Ferry Center as I execute and plan future projects.

- I will definitely apply this knowledge to my role as the lead on an exhibit project currently being planned at my park.
- My next media project will involve exhibits for a small VC type area in a historic building.
- I am starting a project and now know what steps are needed and how to start. I really liked David's Exhibit Planner.

Other comments



MACA Superintendent Ron Switzer welcomed the class and described upcoming media developments in the park.

- You must consider creating a format that enables participants to pick a track with breakout groups that focus on each track. I would have liked to interact more with participants working on exhibit and film projects to discuss "lessons learned" and to walk through different specific elements of these media.
- Perhaps have a short/brief introduction to the Interpretive Development Program at the beginning of the course, and then we could refer back to the IDP or interpretive language during the course.
- Mike Adams [Chief of Interpretation at Mammoth Cave NP] was a fine host.
- Bravo! Thanks for letting me participate!
- Very good course!
- Thanks to everyone for their hard work. It's good to know that we are all connected and that we all share the same challenges. The level of expertise in the room was spectacular!
- Great hospitality. Well planned. Excellent notebooks. Thanks!



be limited to interpreters – open it to managers – budget folks – people who need to understand where we are going as the NPS.

- Thanks so much for making sure we got to see the resource! I've been on several trainings where we met all day and never got to see the park so I was delighted to have resource time built in. Thanks also for putting schedule, design wheel, etc., on web before course.
- Please include thumbnail master in Wayside planning worksheet section. Have a definition sheet of common acronyms and words: i.e., value analysis, treatment plans - there were words that I just don't know. I don't think this course should
- Thanks to HFC and SER for offering the training. Great to put faces with names and titles with HFC people.

- Schedule time to meet individually with HFC staff throughout the course – when scheduled at the end, [it's hard for] people wanting to get home. So it was great when we could talk to them at lunch and when Justin made himself available after course hours on Wednesday.



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